

# Washington State EMERGENCY NEWS/Mitigation & Preparedness



Washington  
Military  
Department  
Emergency  
Management  
Division

Camp Murray  
Washington

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## Government agencies to review effectiveness of tsunami warning process

Camp Murray, Wash. – In the wake of last night's tsunami warning along the Pacific Coast, Washington State's top emergency manager is calling for a review of warning procedures.

"We feel the overall response went well in Washington," said Maj. Gen. Timothy J. Lowenberg, the Adjutant General of the Washington Military Department, "but we also see places where we can improve the system."

At Lowenberg's request, the Department's Emergency Management Division (EMD) will call for a meeting of the State and Local Tsunami Workgroup. The meeting will be scheduled for Camp Murray, Washington in early July.

The Workgroup will walk through the June 14 event, when a potential tsunami could have been triggered by a 7.0 earthquake off the coast of Northern California, with the objective of examining procedures and processes used to disseminate information to the public.

Members of the Tsunami Workgroup are coastal counties, including Clallam, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Pacific, San Juan and Whatcom; coastal tribes, including the Hoh, Quileute, Quinault, Makah and Shoalwater; state agencies, including the Washington Military Department's Emergency Management Division (EMD) and Joint Force Headquarters (JFHQ), and the departments of Transportation and Natural Resources; and federal agencies, including the National Weather Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

"For the Washington coast, our time frame between issuing a warning and a tsunami's arrival can be very short," said EMD Director Jim Mullen. "There could be little time to evaluate, assess or debate. We do know the worst case scenario: that a delayed warning could leave many people unaware of impending disaster. We will evaluate the actions and procedures in place for last night's event to make certain our response procedures are as effective as possible. And we will continue to work with our Congressional delegation to assure targeted public education programs and local warning systems are available to our vulnerable communities in Washington.

"Last night could have been and might have been the day we dread," Mullen continued. "We did very well yesterday, and today we will be working hard to be even better the next time. Warnings are our best means of testing our capabilities and readiness: the next time could be the real thing."

"We will refine the alert and warning process as much as possible," added Major General Lowenberg, "but we will always err on the side of giving the public too much, rather than too little, information about tsunamis and other potential threats."

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